



Space Center Roundup

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Engineering success

Texas Aerospace Scholars use their ingenuity to plan a mission to Mars

By Eric Raub

More than 150 engineering hopefuls recently spent a week at JSC making plans that were out of this world.

The students prepared presentations on the different aspects of a mission to Mars as part of the Texas Aerospace Scholars program (TAS). The participants, all preparing to enter their senior year of high school, traveled a long road culminating in their experience at JSC.

The students had to be selected by their state legislator, as well as have an interest in math, science, engineering or computer science. The students then spent 24 weeks learning about space

exploration over the Internet via distance learning, completing 12 research and design activities. On top of that, the students also submitted a final project two weeks prior to their arrival at JSC.

"The distance learning curriculum prepares scholars for their summer experience with interactive multimedia lessons, engineering design challenges, on-line discussions with JSC engineers and scientists and a virtual scholar community," said Rita Karl, Education and Curriculum Manager.

When the students arrived for their scheduled session they split into three teams and focused on different aspects of a potential Mars mission. During the final presentations the Scholars showed off

their creativity by detailing their travel plans to Mars, as well as describing how humans can live and work on the planet.

Each team had a technical mentor who is a JSC engineer or scientist, as well as a counselor who is a professional educator and a JSC Co-op to assist and guide them.

Douglas Goforth, one of the program leads, explained that, while TAS is fun, it is a program designed to enhance the space program's future. TAS, in just its second year, is hoping to attract students to engineering and eventually to JSC.

"Most of the students are unsure of what they want to do," Goforth said. "The U.S. has such a shortage of engineers, we don't have enough people as engineers or enough people who want to

become engineers. We try and tempt them over to the engineering side."

If organizers have any doubts as to whether their program is having an effect on participants' future plans, they need look no further than high school senior Amy Bowen.

"Before I came here I was thinking about Aerospace Engineering but I wasn't sure," Bowen said. "I came here to find out and, once I got here and saw what the astronauts do and the mission controllers and what everybody else does, I knew it was what I wanted to do."

Even adults who have chosen their career path said they too benefited from

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NASA JSC 2001e25932 Photo by Bill Stafford

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Safety & Total Health Day is Oct. 17.



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A look back at the fun of Open House 2001.



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Go back in time with the 'Sixties Chicks.'

